

imagine

a democratic alternative to the monarchy

PRESIDENTIAL BALLOT

Place a number next to each name, in order of preference.
Place number 1 next to your favourite candidate and so on

Charles Smith

Juliette

Ken Wo

How to elect a Head of State

Electoral Reform Society gives its view

PLUS:

'Answer Back' - New Column Inside
Positively Proactive Campaigning

Elizabeth Wink

Republic

The Campaign for an
Elected Head of State

POSITIVELY PROACTIVE



■ GRAHAM SMITH

Republic is committed to a proactive and positive campaign.

Our new Policy and Strategy

Committee has prompted some discussion on the nature of our campaign, on the need to be proactive rather than reactive, and the need to focus on the positive goal of an elected head of state rather than the negative flipside, the abolition of the monarchy.

Republic always has favoured the more positive approach, hence the slogan 'Campaign for an Elected Head of State'.

That does not mean we will shy away from making legitimate criticism of any member of the Royal family, particularly on constitutional matters. However, we must remain focussed on putting the case for the alternative.

Republic is also committed to a proactive campaign strategy, seeking new ways to get our message across and to get noticed by the media. We often experience resistance to what we have to say in some quarters of the media, but we are making progress.

Some supporters have suggested to me that it is best to wait until the Queen dies before any serious campaigning is done. This is certainly not my view nor the view of the Board. Neither is it reflected in what Republic is doing and is planning to do. We are actively campaigning throughout the year (as you'll see from our Annual Report and news in the *Imagine* magazines).

As with all campaigns much of our media activity is, inevitably, reactive. We respond to stories in the press or events such as the Queen's birthday or the royal financial reports. However, we are working all year round to get all the publicity we can.

Examples of this are the organisation of Republic Day, our continued lobbying of MPs, MEPs, AMs and MSPs, our growing list of high profile supporters from the worlds of the arts, journalism and politics and our presence at party political conferences. We also continue to work on developing new

ideas and bringing new people into the team, whether as Directors, staff or volunteers.

As an organisation Republic's obstacles are money, resources and a media and political class that is resistant to debating our cause; the will and determination of those who manage our campaign is unabated.

In recent months I have been in talks with senior PR and marketing people to look at a new proactive strategy aimed at giving the campaign a huge boost in momentum, weight and profile.

We have also been busy developing a new *Republic Groups* strategy, one designed to make it easier for members to get involved without the need for individuals to act as 'group coordinators'. These groups are initially based online and use existing *Google Group* facilities to allow members to interact.

This new Groups project recognises that the national level campaign which we are conducting must be matched by a network of community based campaigns. Those communities need not just be geographical in nature - we could have a gay Republic group which organises a presence at pride events, we could have a Union group which campaigns throughout the trade union movement and we could have a group which campaigns within the legal profession, to name but a few.

We are already working on building flexible networks of supporters within other movements and sections of society. For example we've helped set up a *Christians for a Republic* group, a *Liberal Democrat Republic* group and a *Youth and Student Republic* group.

These groups will, in future, form part of a dynamic new campaigning initiative, using the latest web-based facilities as well as more traditional locality based tactics.

A lot of this is still in the development stages and a lot more needs to be done. With a volunteer Board and one full-time Campaign Manager there is only so much we can do - but we will be doing so much more. We are committed and dedicated to this cause. We are focussed on our goals and confident of our future success. ■

SPRING CONFERENCE MANCHESTER

Republic's second Spring Conference is to be held in Manchester on Saturday April 21st.

The Spring Conference is a great opportunity for members to get involved, to contribute to the campaign and to find out what's happening.

A formal invitation has already been sent to every member of Republic, asking for proposals and ideas for inclusion in the agenda.

The Conference will be focussed on the strategies and campaigning tactics that Republic must employ during the course of its campaign, and will look at some of the issues that we will be campaigning on.

Visit www.republic.org.uk/spring or call 08708 508 825 for details. ■

British Citizens to 'write new book' on monarchy

Republic wants to know what *you* think about the monarchy, why you oppose it and what you think should replace it.

Comments, ideas and anecdotes will be collated into a new illustrated book which will be published by Republic and promoted as being written by 'British Citizens'.

If you would like to contribute, send your ideas to the usual address or visit www.republic.org.uk/book. ■

Republic becomes Partner in new Democracy Forum

In February Republic joined with Unlock Democracy, Make Votes Count and other groups as a partner in the new

Talk Democracy online debating forum. Join the forum by visiting www.talkdemocracy.org.uk/talk. ■



Letters

I wish to reply to Paul Anderson's letter in the Autumn edition of *Imagine*.

Unfortunately, I think we are about 300 years too late to implement a federal structure for the United Republic of Britain, to make up for the dismal damp squibs of "union" of 1603 and 1707.

Part of the symbolism of rejecting the Stuart/Orange/Hanover/Windsor monarchy is the immediate annulment of the Act of Union. Go back another couple of hundred years and the annexation of Wales into England by the Tudors needs to be reversed as well.

It would be utterly wrong for the English majority in a newly republican ex-United-Kingdom to choose Scotland's or Wales's future. The day after the monarchy falls, the United Kingdom ceases to exist and it is fundamentally for each constituent former nation to decide its own future at that point.

As for a national anthem for England (Wales has a genuine, beautiful, traditional anthem of its own already; Scotland has several); I would propose Abide with Me as the tune and would hope for a national competition for some new words to go with it. Please - no mystic, weird "Jerusalem" or boy-scout/Twickenham/Empire "Land of Hope and Glory".

Gareth Robson
Beckenham

Paul Anderson's letter proposing a title for a future British republic begs a number of important questions. Even if, when the time comes, the United Kingdom still exists in its present form, which the growth of nationalist opinion in Scotland makes increasingly uncertain (and good luck to them, if they settle for a republican future before the rest of us!) we shall need to be very clear about the terms on which the electorate is consulted and how the results are interpreted.

Whatever figure is set for the size of an effective majority, will it be enough for that figure to be reached by the mass total of votes, or will the consent of each of the three nations

of Great Britain, plus Northern Ireland, as shown in votes separately counted and declared, be required? And if the latter, what would be the effect of marked differences among them? Which would be the greater affront to democratic principles, to allow a negative vote by one of the smaller electorates to frustrate the wishes of the rest of the UK, or for them to be forced to accept a republic constitution against their declared will?

I am sure the existence of these and many other crucial issues are well understood within Republic's membership; no-one should imagine that the way ahead is an easy or uncomplicated one.

Derek Fane
Bognor Regis

Paul Anderson's comments on the possible names for a British republic are entirely positive and I wholeheartedly endorse them.

Have readers ever considered the intimidatory content of the expression "Dieu et Mon Droit" - "My God and my right"?

It is entirely anti-democratic in sentiment and aims to put the fear of God into republicans.

Equally, the motto of the Prince of Wales, "Ich dien" - I serve - is entirely false. The Prince is not a servant, but a proponent of a self-serving oligarchy which must be abolished.

Henry Lawson
Wiltshire

I have just discovered and - straight away - joined 'Republic'. I have also just read the letter by Paul Anderson in which he suggests Land of Hope and Glory as a contender for the National Republic Anthem.

Please no! Whilst I appreciate some members will have a religious affiliation let us keep any 'God' out of it and let's simply have an anthem in praise of our Nation.

Richard Wells
Cornwall

Our group recently ran a street stall gaining signatures for the petition and promoting awareness about the reasons why we should have a

Republic. We had a few lively exchanges. The most common comment we had was "who would you elect, David Beckham?", to which I responded "Whoever the people elected, perhaps even the Queen, what I want is a true democracy."

Whilst not everyone in Republic would agree with my repost, those opposing us seemed more willing to listen when we had countered these first silly points. These exchanges got me thinking - as we are confronting the issue head on, shouldn't we be hosting an on-line forum on Republic issues (for and against)?

Stephen Harness
Oxford Area Republic Group

Editor's note: Republic is working on a number of interactive online projects. We have recently launched a series of Republic Group online discussion boards and have become a partner in the new Talk Democracy discussion forums (see opposite page).

My first republican activity was to remain seated during the playing of the statutory God Save the King at the end of the cinema performance. The year was 1937—can anyone beat that?

David Spreckley
Cambridgeshire

Send your letters to
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Republic

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If you would like to contribute an article to Imagine email imagine@republic.org.uk or call Graham Smith on 08708 508 825 and ask for a copy of the Writer's Guidelines.

Inside the republican



■ DAVID ORR
From the Electoral
Reform Society

With its vision of a democratic alternative to the monarchy, the purpose of Republic is relatively simple. It seeks to convince the people of Great Britain and Northern Ireland of the merits of an elected Head of State, culminating in a majority of voters endorsing the dissolution of the monarchy in a referendum. However, what is not so simple is the question of the post-monarchical system that follows. Two dimensions to this question seem particularly important. The first relates to the system by which a Head of State ought to be elected. The second pertains to the powers that should be conferred upon such an individual. This piece does not seek to elaborate in any great detail upon the latter point. However, the Electoral Reform Society (ERS), as the oldest organisation in the UK concerned with electoral systems and procedures, has a legitimate interest in the former. This piece thus seeks to act as a primer that might stimulate debate within Republic as to the preferred system for electing any individual who might replace the monarchy.

At this stage a brief synopsis of the role of ERS may be beneficial for those unfamiliar with the organisation's work. Since 1884 when it was established, the Society has been campaigning for changes in our voting system to make our democracy more representative and our politicians more accountable. In particular, it wants to see voters having more choice and more influence, and it wants a move towards proportional representation – objectives that can best be realised through the use of the Single Transferable Vote (STV) method. Changing the voting system alone, however, will not cure all the problems of our democracy and the Society therefore also engages in campaigns on issues such as Votes

at 16 and Lords reform.

Thus it seems consistent with the purpose of ERS to turn attention to the best system for electing a Head of State. This can be done in an objective fashion on the basis that ERS as an organisation has no firm policy position on whether there should or should not be a republic. What electoral systems ought then to be considered?

The First Past the Post (FPTP) system is well known to voters in the UK, used as it is for elections to the House of Commons and local elections in England and Wales (Northern Ireland in contrast uses STV for local elections with Scotland to follow suit from May 2007 onwards). In order to vote you simply put an "X" next to the name of the candidate you support. The candidate who gets the most votes wins, regardless of whether he or she has more than 50% support. It is the simplicity of the system that is often emphasised by its advocates as its key strength. However FPTP has several serious limitations. Above all it leads to the wasting of many votes. If the candidate for whom an elector casts a vote is unsuccessful that vote is in essence wasted. In 2005, in the General Election, 19 million voters cast ineffective votes – that is 70% of those who voted. The system also leads to many people casting negative votes. They choose to vote for the candidate they dislike least rather than for the candidate they like best. However tactical voting can backfire. Two thirds of the electorate may disdain candidate A but if the protest vote splits between candidates B and C, this leaves open the possibility of the most unpopular candidate sneaking through. Given these shortcomings it seems necessary to look to a different system.

The Supplementary Vote (SV) has risen to prominence most recently as the system used to elect both the Mayor of London and Members of the London Assembly. With the supplementary vote, there are two columns on the ballot paper – one for the first choice and one for the

second choice. Voters are not required to make a second choice if they do not wish to. Voters mark an "X" in the first column for their first choice and a second "X" in the second column for their other choice. Voters' first preferences are counted and if one candidate gets 50% of the vote, then he or she is elected. If no candidate reaches 50% of the vote, the two highest scoring candidates are retained and the rest of the candidates are eliminated. The second preferences on the ballot papers of the eliminated candidates are examined and any that have



been cast for the two remaining candidates are given to them. Whoever has the most votes at the end of the process wins. In terms of limitations, SV does not ensure that the winning candidate has the support of at least 50% of the electorate. Moreover it does not eliminate the likelihood of tactical voting. Finally, as the French Presidential elections of 2002 demonstrated, SV and similar systems (such as the run-off voting system used in France) can produce dubious outcomes. The splintering of the left vote in these elections famously saw Lionel Jospin fail to qualify for the second ballot as the xenophobe Jean-Marie Le Pen capitalised on socialist factional strife. The final contest between Jacques Chirac and Le Pen produced a resounding victory for the former, albeit spurred to success by the disillusioned call to "Vote for a crook, not a fascist". However SV scores better than FPTP on the vote wastage issue. Thus SV seems an improvement on FPTP but still a

n polling booth

system with certain flaws.

The final system that warrants consideration is the Alternative Vote (AV) (which is a special case of the STV when only one candidate is to be elected). Rather than marking an "X" against their preferred candidate, each voter ranks their candidates in an order of preference, putting "1" next to their favourite, a "2" by their second choice and so on. If a candidate receives a simple majority of first place votes, he or she would be elected. However if no single candidate gets more than 50% of the vote, the second choices for the candidate at the bottom are redistributed. The process is repeated until one candidate gets an absolute majority. AV is thus a majoritarian system rather than a proportional system. Several advantages to AV are immediately identifiable. Firstly, any elected Head of State would have the support of the majority of voters. Secondly, electors would have no need to resort to negative voting. They could vote for their first choice of candidate without the fear of wasting their vote. Thirdly, in the unlikely event of an extremist securing a place on the ballot paper AV would all but preclude that individual's being elected. In comparison with the other systems discussed, AV has few striking weaknesses. Interestingly under the new STV electoral system for local government in Scotland, in the event of a by-election after May 2007, the system to be utilised will be AV.

Irrespective of the views of ERS, the views of the electorate in shaping any future system should not be overlooked by Republic. In this regard lessons might be learned from British Columbia. In 2004 a Citizens' Assembly was created by the Government of British Columbia to examine the province's electoral system and to make recommendations as to the best system for the future. Composed of 160 members, one man and one woman from each of the 79 provincial electoral districts (constituencies) plus two Aboriginal members, this independent, non-partisan body was

selected at random to reflect the gender, age and geographical make-up of British Columbia. This fine example of participatory democracy at work offers a template for other countries to replicate. Perhaps Republic should put the issue of the system for electing a Head of State to a Citizens' Assembly. It is worth emphasising that the system ultimately selected by the Assembly in Canada was that of STV. In Habermasian terms, the forceless of the better argument prevailed.

Although not specifically related to the electoral system, another means of maximising popular participation in the event of a Republic being secured would be to offer the electorate an opportunity to play a role in candidate selection. There has been pressure in Ireland in recent years to reform certain aspects of the nominations system for the Presidency of Ireland. Currently to secure nomination for the Presidency one must be an Irish citizen of at least 35 with the support of one of the following:

- At least twenty members of the Oireachtas (bi-cameral national parliament).
- At least four county or city councils.
- Themselves (in the case of an incumbent or former president).

It has been suggested in certain quarters that a petition of citizens with a sufficiently high threshold (around 10,000) ought to be included as an additional avenue to securing nomination. Given the largely positive experience of the Scottish Parliament with respect to the role played by the Petitions Committee in promoting popular participation in politics, this issue deserves scrutiny by Republic.

In summary then, the position of ERS in the event of an election for a Head of State would be to support the implementation of AV. Additionally, steps that can be taken to engage the public fully in the shaping of a Republic should be fully explored. ■

David Orr is the Scottish Youth and Campaigns Officer at the Electoral Reform Society.

Answer Back

Welcome to *Answer Back*. In this new column we will highlight the common arguments in favour of the monarchy - and answer back.



They Say - "The monarchy is good for tourism and brings in millions of pounds each year."

We Say - Says who? This is a fictional piece of propaganda with no supporting evidence, which is irrelevant to the argument about the future of our constitution.

It is based on bad logic - the argument goes: we have tourists, we have a monarchy, therefore the monarchy brings in tourists. But supporters of this view never stop to look for any evidence that shows a link between monarchy and tourism.

Revenue from royal residences such as Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle make up less than 1% of Britain's total tourism income. That income is concentrated almost exclusively in London. There is no benefit for Scotland, Wales or regional England.

Britain is quite capable of bringing in tourists without the help of the royal family - just compare visitor figures for Windsor Castle and Windsor Legoland. In 2005 Legoland attracted almost 1.4 million tourists, Windsor Castle was visited by a little over 900,000. Buckingham Palace saw 110,000 pass through its over-priced doors.

Of course, if the monarchy were gone we would be able to have more tourists visiting Buckingham Palace, as they would be allowed full access to the site all year round.

These arguments aside, decisions about democratic constitutions cannot be made on the basis of projected tourism income. The UK is a democratic nation-state, not a theme park. ■



Tell us what arguments you'd like us to answer - write to *Imagine*, PO Box 69, Brighton BN50 9GS or email imagine@republic.org.uk and we'll Answer Back!

I am a republican



■ MICHAEL COYNE

Britain, and certainly Scotland, has had it with wars and other Imperial frippery. Britain is the fifth-richest country on the planet, yet there are areas in the UK, especially in Scotland, which are so poor they would shame the Third World.

Atop this society is the monarchy, with a head of state whose cumulative wealth (i.e. counting both personal wealth plus wealth officially enjoyed as head of state) has been estimated by the Daily Mail (by no means republican) at around £20 billion. It is disgraceful that one family should live in such vast, unearned opulence, while so many of the people they purport to represent eke out an existence in atrocious, hopeless poverty. This is not just gross inequity. It is gross iniquity – and we, as a nation, should be ashamed of this.

What the monarchy does represent, quite accurately, is the fact that our democracy is essentially a veneer,

beneath which antiquated concepts of class and genealogy, unwarranted and unjustifiable privilege, unelected, unaccountable influence and medieval mumbo-jumbo all still reign supreme. Even now there are still people who believe the monarch to be God's representative on earth, and that she rules by divine right.

It ranks with believing in the tooth fairy or the Easter bunny (actually, it makes less sense – at least, with the tooth fairy, we get the money). But republicans won't triumph by seeking to convert fervent royalists.

Statistically, the split in the country is likely akin to that in America at the time of the Revolution: one-third for a new nation and a new freedom, one-third for sticking with the Crown, and one-third in the middle. It's not the conviction republicans who'll eventually win the day but the 'floating voters' who, for long enough, have perceived other political priorities, or who've been blithely unconcerned, or even downright apathetic.

When enough people with no previous strongly-held opinion on the subject start to believe the royal

family have had their feet under our table long enough, that will make the difference. Prior to this, however, those already in favour of a republic might further that cause by coalescing into a formidable, focused movement.

A recent poll estimated Scots support for a republic at around 49%. There are UK nationals and members of the Commonwealth all over the world who believe it's time for the sun to set on the monarchy; and, in all likelihood, nowhere is there a higher concentration of that sentiment than in Scotland. Yet at present, Republic has not one single group north of the border. Well, it's not because we're deferential. So why hasn't Republic taken off here? Could it be that the Scots like the idea of a republic but, when push comes to shove, we're just too apathetic to do anything about it? Or are there deeper restraints?

I would suggest there are two. The first is Scottish Nationalism. Scottish enthusiasm for a republic has been diverted into Scottish Nationalism, and watered down by a party not wholeheartedly committed to republicanism. Republic, as an organisation, is neither for nor against Scottish independence, but maintains that if Scotland remains part of a united Britain, it should do so with a

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A Message from the Chair



John Campbell

I'd like to start by saying a big thank you to you, our members, for the terrific response we've had to our Membership Survey which we sent out with the last

edition of *Imagine*.

The responses, as you'll see in the report on the back page of this edition, were overwhelmingly positive and encouraging, with some caveats and exceptions.

Two key points that were picked up from the responses were, firstly, that members would like to see more information and news in *Imagine*. Some said they would like to see it extended to more pages and a number of suggestions were made about what sort of items could be included. Secondly, a lot of you expressed an interest in getting

involved, or at least in touch, with a local group or with other Republic members.

Well, I'm pleased to say that we have responded to both of these with immediate effect.

The next edition of *Imagine* will be a special extended edition, featuring twelve pages of news and information. We will be featuring more facts and figures that will help you in your own debates with friends, family and colleagues. We will also be continuing the new 'Answer Back' feature which has been launched in this issue.

If all goes well this extended format will be repeated with future editions of the magazine.

We have also been developing ways of making it easier for you to get in touch with other members and supporters and to get involved within your own communities and social and

political networks.

Our new *Republic Groups*, which have replaced the local groups format, allow members to join up and instantly contact others in that group via online message boards.

The groups do not rely on Republic's staff or local coordinators. They rely instead on the enthusiasm of our members and supporters. Republic cannot create groups from nothing, they need your support to make them work. Already the Oxford group and the Christian group are showing the way with active debate and, in the case of Oxford, plans for meetings and campaigning activities.

Republic is a democratic campaigning movement and, as with all democracies, it needs the active participation of its members to succeed. As we grow we hope these groups will evolve so they are not limited to the internet, but instead can get out there, in our towns and cities, and start spreading the republican word. So I hope that you will join an online *Republic Group*. ■

Continued from page 6
democratically-elected head of state. It's possible that a party preoccupied with self-determination for Scotland may not perceive any immediate benefit in an alliance with a British campaign at present run largely from the South of England.

However the majority of the Nationalist rank-and-file are republicans. In the Livingston and Cathcart by-elections, yet again, victory eluded the SNP. This is possibly because most voters aren't interested in the Nationalists' message; or it might be because they're not altogether clear about what that message is. It would make perfect sense for the SNP to endorse republicanism wholeheartedly. It would most likely further the cause of Scottish independence. It would certainly increase the pressure for a fairer, more egalitarian political system in Britain. Either would be preferable to the present state of affairs.

The second factor impeding the progress of a republic in Scotland is the Labour party. Labour is the Establishment party in Scotland. They are doing very nicely out of the status quo, so Scottish Labour won't be at the forefront of the campaign for a republic. To them, the proposition is as unattractive as proportional

representation. A measure of power might shift from the politicians to the people, and then where would we (and they) be? Of course, they'd respond with the adage: 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it.' I would counter that with another classic American aphorism: 'If you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem.'

The Labour party has long been a major constituent in that complacency which keeps the monarchy entrenched as both pinnacle and epicentre of the British political state. This, by its very essence, constricts democratic participation. Moral cowardice and lickspittle leadership have consistently prevented a political party founded to advance social justice from addressing the most unjustifiable inequity on the horizon. Talk about the means of production all you want; but until we have a fairer means of election, starting with the head of state, complete with greater accessibility and accountability, we're going nowhere. Socialists just want to have a few more crumbs from the pie; but I'd suggest republicans should be concentrating on the entire pie. ■

This is the third part of a full length article - being serialised in *Imagine* - which was originally published in *The Drouth* magazine.

100 Club

The winning numbers: In December the winner was number 1079, John Kay, winning a cash prize of £51.60. January's winner was 1114, Christine Tanner, winning £52.40.

The numbers were drawn at a meeting of the Board of Directors. *Remember*, you need to be in it to win it. The more members, the bigger the prizes.

GOOD LUCK FOR NEXT MONTH

www.republic.org.uk/100

ROUND UP

Website Gets Revamp

The new look website was released just before Christmas. The new look (right) has improved navigation and has made key parts of the site more prominent.



School talks

A number of schools have been approaching Republic for speakers recently. Three have arranged for Republic to visit them during February and March. More requests continue to come in.

Winter Party

Republic's first Winter Party took place on February 10th. Party goers had an enjoyable evening, meeting other members and Directors and enjoying a chance to discuss Republic and its cause.

Labour website

Hundreds of supporters helped make Republic's campaign page one of the most popular on the Labour Party website during December. ■

Opinions expressed in articles and letters are not necessarily the view or policy of Republic, its staff or its Board of Directors.



The Republic Writing Club

a new chapter

www.republic.org.uk/writers

Republic has recently set up an online *Republic Writing Club*. The *Club* is designed to allow members and supporters to talk with each other, share ideas and to provide support and encouragement in writing letters and articles to the press, MPs and for *Imagine*.

The mission of the club is to:

- encourage its members to write regular letters to the local and national press;
- write articles for the press and Republic's *Imagine* magazine;
- assist Republic in the drafting of its promotional material where appropriate;
- seek new ways to promote Republic and republicanism through factual and creative writing.

Joining the *Club* is easy... just visit www.republic.org.uk/writers and follow the links. The *Club* will be driven by its contributors. It is hoped the *Writing Club* will be an excellent resource for producing written material and for developing an active letter-writing campaign. So get involved and help make a difference. ■

Positive response to Member Survey

As readers will remember, with the last issue of *Imagine* we enclosed a Members' Survey, aimed at finding out what you think about Republic, why you support the campaign and how you view the organisation.

This was the first wide scale assessment of member feedback, and we took the opportunity to ask your views on a number of aspects of our campaign, including our *Imagine* magazine.

A total of 238 members returned a completed survey, (an excellent response!) either by filling out the survey form sent out with *Imagine* or by completing the online version on the Republic website.

Among other things, the results showed that:

→ whilst most respondents said they joined Republic to support the organisation financially or to get regular information about the campaign, 20% said they joined to meet fellow republicans. 90% stated that a key reason for joining was to register protest at the system of monarchy.

→ 59% of you thought you had learnt more about the republican issue during your membership

→ 55% of members read *Imagine* "cover to cover", with the majority of other respondents saying they read "most articles".

→ 87% of you are either "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with your membership (31% and 56% respectively).

The survey included many interesting comments and suggestions from members. When asked for your 'key reasons' for joining we received such replies as, "Whilst we have a monarchy we cannot claim to be a democracy" and, "Prince Charles is a ninny! We want an elected President" as well as, "I wanted to help achieve a fairer society for my grandchildren".

Answers about how our members first heard about Republic showed that we are beginning to reach all corners of the country with a variety of

methods. Some reported they had seen our car stickers, others had seen our national advertising and others still had been handed a leaflet or had seen us at a party conference.

A number of suggestions were made for the content of the *Imagine* magazine. The most common suggestion was that the magazine should provide facts and figures and arguments which would be useful to members when debating the issues with friends, family and colleagues.

The more general question about improvements to membership led to a whole raft of suggestions, from online forums (see the 'Talk Democracy' item on page 2) to more contact with other members and local groups (see the *Positively Proactive* article and the *Message from the Chair* in this issue) and more opportunities to 'get involved'.

Republic takes all these suggestions and comments seriously and has already begun to work on some initiatives in response to the survey results. For example, the website has already been revamped in light of some of the observations we received in relation to the content and layout, with the information about our campaign now being presented more clearly.

Additionally, as John mentioned in his 'Message from the Chair', *Imagine* will be reviewed and expanded for future editions. The new 'Answer Back' column was conceived in direct response to requests by our members for credible arguments to counter oft-heard pro-monarchy clichés (such as: more political stability, more tourism, lower costs than a president...we'll be covering them all!).

Finally, the survey was anonymous, and so we are unable to contact any individual members to reply to specific points or questions raised.

However, if you would like to follow up any questions or concerns you raised in the survey, please do get in touch with Graham Smith, our Campaign Manager, who will be pleased to discuss matters with you further. Graham can be reached on 07747 608 770 or at the usual PO Box address. ■

Your Turn!

Five easy things YOU can do to support Republic

1

Get involved in one of our new Republic Groups. See www.republic.org.uk/groups for details

2

Write to your MP, ask them for their views on the monarchy and if they will support Republic. Your MP's address is: House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA.

3

Sign the Downing Street petition... visit www.republic.org.uk and see the link at the bottom of the home page.

4

Make a donation to the cause - you can send cheques to the usual address or pay online or over the phone.

5

Ask for our *Make Monarchy History* postcards and hand them out to friends, colleagues or people in the street.

Find out more by visiting www.republic.org.uk or by calling Republic on 08708 508 825.